Antonio Colinas: The Re-Writing of "Sepulcro en Tarquinia" in *Larga carta a Francesca*

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Abstract

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(Under the direction of Dr. José Polo de Bernabé)

This study begins by summarizing the life and literary accomplishments of Antonio Colinas, a contemporary Spanish poet, and his development as a writer over the past forty years. The proposal is that Colinas' poem "Sepulcro en Tarquinia" (1975) is the basis for his novel *Larga carta a Francesca* (1986). Chapter two introduces the poem and analyzes its language, imagery, and main themes, among these love, illness, and death. The following chapter compares the themes, language, imagery, and cultural references (Italy) between the poem and novel, determining that all of these coincide in some way except the ending of the novel. Chapter four concludes that Colinas rewrote "Sepulcro" in *Larga carta* eleven years later, with a different ending, because of changing philosophies and his relatively recent incorporation of Taoist thought into his writing.

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Table of Contents

Chapter I: Antonio Colinas: from Tarquinia to Francesca.....1

Chapter II: (Reading and) Writing “Sepulcro en Tarquinia”.....7

Chapter III: (Reading and) Rewriting “Sepulcro en Tarquinia” in *Larga carta a Francesca*.....22

Part IV: Conclusion: Colinas’ Journey from Culturalism to Taoism.....36

Works Consulted.....40

Chapter I. Antonio Colinas: from Tarquinia to Francesca

In his study introducing the Cátedra edition of Antonio Colinas' poetry, José Enrique Martínez mentions that there exist correlations between the poem "Sepulcro en Tarquinia" (1975; from the book of the same title) and the novel *Larga carta a Francesca* (1986) (80). He does not, however, pursue the topic, nor mention any specific points of comparison. Here I intend to take his suggestion and develop it into a study that focuses on the many similarities I have found between the two works. But first let us introduce their author.

Antonio Colinas Lobato was born in the town of La Bañeza, León in 1946. He was educated in Spain and has published works as a poet, novelist, essayist, journalist, short-story writer, translator, and literary critic over the course of a more than forty-year literary career, though his most prolific and successful genre is poetry. Colinas' works have been enriched by the several culturally diverse places in which he has lived and traveled, especially within Spain (Salamanca, Madrid, Córdoba, Ibiza) and Italy (Milan, Bergamo). His more than twenty years in Ibiza, where he still resides in summer, was a period of great literary production. Today he resides principally in Salamanca, near his city of birth. As evidenced by his many publications (the most recent published in 2008: *Desiertos de la luz*), several national and international literary prizes (such as El Premio Nacional de la Crítica 1975, El Premio Nacional de Literatura 1982, El Premio Nacional de Traducción de Italia 2005, etc.), and various expositions in his honor, Antonio Colinas continues to be a prolific, active, and popular writer in Spain.

Antonio Colinas' literary production has developed and grown greatly over the past four decades. In this time, he has published over thirty distinct books (a dozen of these poetry), not to mention almost a dozen poetic anthologies and translations of several important Italian poets (Leopardi, Quasimodo, etc.) and some in other languages as well (Calleja 45). Colinas is one of Spain's most important contemporary poets, yet he is not well known in the English-speaking world, perhaps because of the cultural density and complexity of his works and the resulting difficulties in understanding them, but also because of the recentness of his work. Colinas' writing has been explored in a number of critical works on his poetry (almost all published in Spain), which tend to explore its originality, lyricism, and vivid visual imagery, among other topics. Very few critical works exist on his prose in comparison to his poetry. It may be the lack of critical attention to his novels that has allowed many to overlook the similarities between the two works that this study will explore.

Colinas' poetry is not only important to those who study the literature and history of post-Franco Spain; it is significant for all who study the written arts. Themes such as death, love, nature, beauty, knowledge, and art lend Colinas' poems universal qualities that will appeal to many. Though he incorporates universal themes into his poetry, Colinas is also considered to be a unique voice among those of his generation. He does not follow the trends of his contemporaries, but is faithful to his own aesthetics. A few critics place Colinas among *los novísimos*, one of the newest literary generations in Spain, defined by J.M. Castellet in *Nueve novísimos poetas españoles* (1970). Colinas, however, had just published his first book of poetry in 1969, and was not recognized among those nine poets. Luis Miguel Alonso asserts:

> Antonio Colinas pertenece de pleno derecho a la última generación de la poesía española: los poetas novísimos o del 70, con los que comparte una concepción estética de la poesía, la preocupada elaboración del lenguaje poético, los motivos y términos suntuarios, las citas y alusiones «culturalistas» y la ruptura de la secuencia sintáctica. (*Corazón* 110)

Many of his characteristics, however, differ considerably from those that define the *novísimos*. Colinas' connection with nature, element of mystery, interest in the works of Antonio Machado, and lack of irony or allusions to popular culture (cinema, comics, etc.) all separate him from that generation (Alonso, *Corazón* 110). Juan Cano Ballesta also excludes Colinas from the *novísimos*, writing that he creates a "new kind of poetry, in which aestheticism informs the personal experiences of the poet" (695). In addition, Alonso asserts that Colinas was greatly influenced by "los poetas románticos centroeuropeos: Leopardi, Hölderlin, Novalis" (*Corazón* 110). In his 1989 article on "Sepulcro en Tarquinia," Juan Manuel Rozas agrees that Colinas shares many characteristics of the Romantic poets: "Toda su poesía es muy romántica y él [siempre] ha defendido una estética romántica de una forma declarada" (28). These poets held a great influence over Colinas in his earlier years as a writer, when he was looking to his literary predecessors for inspiration, and at the same time searching for his own voice.

We have already mentioned several characteristics that separate Colinas from other poets of his generation (his temporal generation, if not also literary). In a recent publication, Alonso defines four *etapas* of Colinas' writing up to the present day. First, in the late 1960s and early 1970s, came the *etapa neorromántica*, characterized by "el sentimiento amoroso y el gusto por ambientaciones otoñales, crepusculares y [el] contacto directo con la naturaleza" (*Seis poemas* 5). We see these characteristics spill over into "Sepulcro en Tarquinia," written in 1972, combined with elements from Colinas' second *etapa*. Alonso defines this second

period with “el culturalismo[,] esa tendencia creadora que incorpora a la dicción numerosas referencias culturales y artísticas, tomadas de la literatura, la historia, la música, la pintura…” (*Seis poemas* 8). The poems from this era, including all poems in *Sepulcro en Tarquinia*, require cultural knowledge, especially that of the arts, in order to be understood. Later, in the early 1980s, begins the third *etapa*, which according to Alonso is “caracterizad[a] principalmente por la reflexión,” or meditation on various topics (*Seis poemas* 11). Here we no longer observe the quantity of cultural references as in years before (though they have not disappeared altogether). In the fourth *etapa*, these allusions are even scarcer, as Colinas’ poetry moves toward embodying “la esencialidad,” a deeper kind of contemplation that is “cada vez más apurada, más austera en lo expresivo…, más desnuda y esencial” (Alonso, *Seis poemas* 19). This latest era continues today. Colinas, in his 2008 book *El sentido primero de la palabra poética*, confirms much of the critics’ assertions:

> …Nunca he podido tener una visión *poética* (total) del mundo sin beber de los manantiales de las distintas formas del arte y, por extensión, de cada una de nuestras vivencias. Más allá del sentido general de mi exposición, he querido subrayar autores y temas, ciudades y ruinas –signos, símbolos– de cuatro tiempos decisivos para la creación artística universal: el mundo grecolatino, el renacimiento italiano, el romanticismo y la edad contemporánea. (9-10, emphasis is the author’s)

We will observe later that neither “Sepulcro en Tarquinia” nor *Larga carta a Francesca* can be completely defined by one specific *etapa*, nor by just one of the eras that Colinas has defined for us. Characteristics from the eras from which the author draws inspiration are more pronounced at certain times than at others during his literary career, however, they never disappear altogether and will often mix.

Critics have also linked the works of Colinas to themes within the poetry of some *Generación del '27* poets, specifically Pedro Salinas.[1] Rozas, for example, claims that the way Colinas treats the theme of love is similar to that of Salinas: "*La voz a ti debida* y *Razón de amor* son poemas que cuentan una historia amorosa con un hilo argumental menos claro que el de Colinas," but still quite similar (2). He also compares some common vocabulary between "Sepulcro" and Salinas' "Para vivir no quiero…" What's more interesting, however, is that what Salinas communicates in his three most famous books of poetry, the two mentioned above plus *Largo lamento*, Colinas condenses into one poem. Salinas' three books recount a love story and its tragic ending—in "Sepulcro," we essentially find the same thing. Colinas and Salinas share other characteristics as well: the themes of harmony, love, and the connection between art and reality (life), and the use of natural objects as symbols (*Antología comentada* 96). The similarities between these two poets also distances Colinas from the *novísimos*, "pues Salinas no es poeta que esté de moda entre [ellos]" (Rozas 2).

While he does refer to his own rich literary tradition, Antonio Colinas is better described as a writer who transcends cultural and linguistic boundaries. Being a translator himself, he has close ties with Italian literature and that of several other countries. Between 1970 and 1974, Colinas was a professor of Spanish literature in the Universities of Milan and Bergamo. Those years resulted in several works that integrated Italian geography, history, and culture into his Spanish-language works, notably *Sepulcro en Tarquinia* and *Larga carta a Francesca*. *Sepulcro en Tarquinia*, published for the first time in 1975, is Colinas' third book of poetry. Written during his stay in Italy, it is greatly influenced by his environment at that time. It is logical to say that his stay there probably initiated his *etapa culturalista*.

[1] Colinas dedicated the first edition of *Sepulcro en Tarquinia* to Vicente Aleixandre (Martínez 149).

Larga carta a Francesca was published in 1986, eleven years after *Sepulcro,* and long after he had returned from Italy. This novel demonstrates many of the culturalist tendencies from Colinas' earlier years, although it was written in a distinct *etapa* of Colinas' artistic development.

In this study, I will show that "Sepulcro en Tarquinia" (the poem) and the novel *Larga carta a Francesca* share characters, parallel narratives (except the endings), many identical and similar cultural references, and even imagery and poetic language. A comparative study has not been done between these two works before. Their comparison, however, is essential to understanding the works both independently and together, and Colinas' aesthetic and philosophical development as a writer. Published first, "Sepulcro" is not a simplified version of *Larga carta,* but an abstraction of it in which the language and images are condensed and presented out of a solid narrative (and temporal) context. Over a decade later, Colinas takes the essential elements from his poem and expands them into a novel, a much more tangible story. He adds several narrative components and a different ending, but retains the essence of the original work. In this study, I will explore how and why Colinas wrote and rewrote the same story in two distinct genres over ten years apart. The analysis presented here cannot be exhaustive, though the topic is quite specific, because both works are so rich and complex. I hope that this study will be considered as an introduction to these two works, their author, and the themes that inspired them both.

Chapter II. (Reading and) Writing "Sepulcro en Tarquinia"

After reading *Larga carta* and making the inevitable connection between it and "Sepulcro en Tarquinia," it is difficult to interpret the poem without referring to the novel for context. This part of the study, however, will concentrate exclusively on interpreting the poem.

"Sepulcro en Tarquinia," the central poem from Colinas' book of the same title (1975), is a long poem made up of twenty stanzas of varying length (between six and forty-one verses each; 426 verses total in the most recent edition). Each is united by a group of images that more or less correspond aesthetically—some might be called scenes. The only punctuation marks found are commas, colons, and an occasional ellipsis at the end of a stanza; capitalization is utilized only for proper nouns. By avoiding conventional punctuation, especially periods and semi-colons, Colinas gives a very fluid quality to this poem—the only definite stops are the blank lines between each stanza. But not even all of these are definite stops; some are continued by ellipses. His unusual punctuation contributes to a faster reading of the poem in most sections, making each image seem like a brief flash in a rapid succession of images. The imagery is dense, concrete, and profuse, and could be characterized as stream-of-consciousness: the order of the images follows the speaker's thoughts in a seemingly random, almost dream-like manner.

Colinas' verses are free of rhyme in "Sepulcro,"[2] however, most are written in *endecasílabo,* a meter appropriately Italian in origin for a poem that largely treats Italian themes.[3] Yet Colinas does not mix the Italian language with his elaborate Castilian—we only find Italian in the two epigraphs that Colinas chose to introduce the poem.[4] This Italian-themed poem in Italian meter, written in the Castilian language, is symbolic of the relationship between the speaker of the poem, who is Spanish, and his beloved, who is Italian. It is also representative of the time Colinas spent in Italy, four important and influential years in his formation as a poet. Without his stay there, neither "Sepulcro" nor *Larga carta* could have been written with such insight into a culture not his own.

Apart from its form, the most apparent elements in "Sepulcro" are its vivid imagery and culturalist references. Nature is also well represented throughout the work. These images may at first seem randomly placed, with no uniting factor, however, according to José Enrique Martínez:

> El hilo que recorre el poema es, por lo tanto, una historia de amor que…el poeta no narra, sino que sugiere, a la vez que la disemina a lo largo del poema. De esta diseminación o fragmentación de la historia amorosa, así como de los

[2] Not all of Colinas' poetry is written in blank verse, though it does seem to be his preferred method.

[3] Many Italian poets that have been influential in Colinas' work have employed the *metro endecasílabo*, for example: Dante, Petrarch, more recently Giacomo Leopardi (whose works Colinas has translated into Castilian), etc.

[4] The first epigraph is an excerpt from the poem "Ferrara", found in *Le Città del Silenzio* by Gabriele D'Annunzio (1863-1938) (Bernini 411-12):

E loderò quella che più mi piacque
delle tue donne morte
e il tenue riso ond'ella mi delude
e l'alta imagine ond'io mi consolo
nella mia mente…
e il sogno di volontà che sta sepolto
sotto le pietre mute

The second is an excerpt from part twenty-three of Dante's *Vita Nuova* (Alighieri 102):

Poi mi partia, consumato ogni duolo

> cambios temporales proceden, en parte, las dificultades de interpretación del poema. (80)

The "fragmentación" that Martínez describes is the lack of a logical flow or order of events within "Sepulcro." Juan Manuel Rozas, in his article "Mi visión del poema «Sepulcro en Tarquinia»," asserts that the poem is separated into three distinct parts, separated by the two stanzas that are written entirely between parentheses (2). According to his reading, the three parts include: "una primera, donde se habla del recuerdo insistente de ella enferma…Más tarde, viene la segunda parte,…el momento de la muerte…Y, por fin, una tercera parte, que sería la apoteosis de la muerte, del júbilo, de la entrega" (2). For Rozas, these three parts do not follow a logical temporal order either—death should come last. But logic and order are not significant elements in this work. The poem may arguably be separated into three parts; however, what each one signifies is open for interpretation. The following paragraphs will outline a somewhat different analysis than that of Rozas and other critics, though their ideas are valuable for interpreting the poem. Briefly, the poem opens with memories of the later part of the relationship between the speaker and his *amada*, followed by her death. The last part is then a fantasy, in which the speaker imagines or dreams of her alive and them together once again.

It must first be mentioned that the entire poem is nostalgic in tone—the speaker is remembering his beloved (the majority is written in past tense); he directs his voice to her, *tú*. The first two stanzas begin with the same couplet: "se abrieron las cancelas de la noche, / salieron los caballos a la noche…" The second stanza continues: "se agitaron las zarzas del recuerdo, / pasó un desierto (el mar) por mi recuerdo…" (v. 1-2, 30-33). In agreement with Rozas' interpretation, these metaphors symbolize the process of remembering the past, opening the floodgates of memory (2). The natural symbols appearing in these opening lines

prepare readers for the great amount of natural imagery that will follow. The stanza continues with images related to autumn, the season that symbolizes the *amada*'s illness and the breakdown of their relationship:

> después del sueño lento de otoño,
> después del largo sorbo de otoño
> ……
> del otoño con árboles dorados
> ……
> con los muros cubiertos de rosales
> tardíos
> y tú en aquel tranvía
> ……
> aquel rostro otoñal que no vería
> nunca más, amor mío, nunca más… (vv. 6-7, 9, 11-13, 17-18)

The fall and winter are Colinas' preferred and most frequently utilized seasons (Rozas 2). In "Sepulcro," fall foreshadows death and loss, which will later be symbolized by snow and winter (the speaker's environment as he writes or remembers). "Sueño lento" and "largo sorbo" suggest that the lovers' last season together seemed unending for the pain that both were suffering: the *amada*'s physical illness, and the speaker's emotional pain. Her "rostro otoñal" is a face aged by this illness—a face that the speaker will contemplate and describe more as the poem continues.

At the end of stanza one, we observe several symbols of life ("con un sueño de potros…/ un hato de ciervos…/ un nido de tigres en los ojos," vv. 20-22) in immediate contrast with those of death:

> y con la bruma de los cementerios,
> y con los hierros de los cementerios,
> y con las *nubes rojas* allá arriba
> (encima de *cipreses* y *aves muertas*,
> del *tomillo* y los *búcaros* fragantes)
> *de los cementerios*
> *navegando en tus ojos* (vv. 23-29, emphasis mine)

The last time he saw her, the speaker saw life and death conflicting in her eyes. At this point, the beginning of the poem, she has already been ill for some time and their relationship has become impossible to maintain. Funereal imagery dominates these verses—cypresses, vases of flowers, and cemeteries foreshadow the *amada*'s fate. The *tomillo*, "thyme" in English, is an herb associated with treating pulmonary diseases—this is an allusion to the specific ailment from which she suffers (Lehner 124). The "nubes rojas" also foreshadow the great storm that will soon occur, their red color suggesting the blood and impending violence associated with the *amada*'s illness.

After stanza one, the speaker presents himself as the writer of this poem:

> *si me vieras junto a esta mesa oscura*
> con la manta y los vidrios de colores,
> *con el fuego apagado, sin más fuego*
> *que éste de aquí del pecho*, de aquel otro
> de tus días pasando apresurada
> hacia el lago y la noche y los jardines,
> si me vieras,
> si supieras: … (vv. 36-38, emphasis mine)

It is at his writing table, the "mesa oscura," that the speaker begins to remember or relive the past. The "fuego apagado" represents his memories and ability to write, repressed until the moment in which he begins to unlock them—when he begins to write, he feels the fire burning again in his chest. This fire can also symbolize the passion of his relationship, smothered by his lover's illness and death, but rekindling now as he remembers. In the third stanza we find images of repression and death: chained lions, ruined fountains, poison, dead leaves, dead suns, and frozen moons (vv. 44-56). These images symbolize the repressive quality of the woman's illness—images of nature and beauty that have been destroyed.

The fourth stanza introduces us to art and music, two vital elements of this poem: it is a scene that seems to take place in an ancient church—a place the lovers might have visited. Here, art reflects, duplicates, or immortalizes beauty, a woman's beauty. The music represents, in part, the passion of this relationship. Exemplifying this passion, the following verses also illustrate Colinas' tendency to relate experiences in a rapid series of images:

> …había una música
> y una luz en ojivas y arquitrabes,
> Lentz, Scarlatti, Telemann, Vivaldi,
> techos llenos de frescos, los sagrarios,
> las ancianas maderas aromadas,
> carcomidas, lustrosas, de los coros,
> el retablo, las losas, las trompetas,
> el tropel de los ángeles, a veces
> un son de mandolino, aquella virgen
> de Botticelli con tu rostro, violas
> temblando en nuestras venas y un gran coro
> tronando enfurecido con el órgano,
> con el corazón (vv. 65-77)

The music, the rhythm, of these lines goes faster and faster, with less end stops toward the end of the stanza, representing a mounting energy. The music enters the lovers' very bodies; it runs through their veins and hearts. In this passage we also have a physical description of the *amada*: she looks like Botticelli's virgin. This does not refer to a religious painting, according to José Enrique Martínez, but to Sandro Botticelli's portraits of the Florentine noblewoman Simonetta Vespucci (167).[5] He writes that she was "una joven hermosa, rubia, erguida y delicada… [quien] murió de tuberculosis a los veintitrés años (Martínez 151).[6] Both Simonetta and the *amada*, beautiful Italian women, died young. Later in the poem,

[5] The first poem in *Sepulcro en Tarquinia* is entitled "Simonetta Vespucci".

[6] There are at least four portraits assumed to be of Simonetta that are attributed to Botticelli or associated with his workshop. It is also thought that Simonetta inspired Botticelli's portrayal of Venus in his famous *Birth of Venus*. (Venturi 8)

there are images suggesting that the *amada* dies of tuberculosis as well, reinforcing the parallels between them. One stanza in particular offers an image that suggests one of the more apparent symptoms of tuberculosis, coughing blood:

> …el grito de los cisnes en el lago
> les anunciaba el paso de la muerte,
> la enfermedad y el Arte y el deseo
> y el no poder besar aquellos labios
> sin pensar en *las flores de la sangre*… (vv. 214-218, emphasis mine)

Later in the poem, there is an allusion to another Italian noblewoman who died young, at the age of twenty-two: "¿de qué te quejas, Beatrice d'Este / si tienes un vestido hecho de oro?" (vv. 250-51). This reference continues to emphasize the young age of the amada at her death. The image of Beatrice d'Este and her golden dress may come from the painting *Pala Sforzesca* (c. 1495), in which Beatrice wears a dark dress ribboned with gold; she was known for her elaborate wardrobe (Tinagli 61-62). José Enrique Martínez also notes that she was Duchess of Milan, and that her portrait had been painted by Leonardo da Vinci (173). Colinas references Italian Renaissance art frequently in this poem. It is not, however, limited to paintings, but also includes literature, architecture, and music.

The following two stanzas continue the theme of music; in them it is suggested that the *amada* performs in concerts ("todos te miraban," v. 103). At this point, however, not even music can bring her out of the depression caused by her illness ("no eras feliz entonces..."). Here the speaker describes his beloved as a musical instrument:

> no eras feliz entonces, yo diría,
> después de los conciertos, yo diría
> que tu piel era suave como un cetro,
> como un cetro preciada y dura y firme,
> qué caja de viola todo el vientre,

yo diría
que un órgano sonaba por tus venas… (vv. 96-102)

Music, a representation of passion and life, will lose its power just as the *amada* will: Throughout these stanzas, the phrase "si llorabas" is repeated six times, dominating and negating any positive connotations that the music may have had. Its repetition may be considered a kind of sorrowful refrain that reminds us again and again of the pain that the lovers suffered, and that the speaker is suffering now as he writes. "Si llorabas" also refers to a repeated action on the part of the *amada*, demonstrating her fragile mental state. The following stanza, written between parentheses, reinforces this idea with the image of a swan, "bulbo de nieve y lluvia y música," whose head has been shattered (v. 152). Woman and music are connected in the images of the instruments above; yet she is also linked to the swan through shared beauty and a tragic death: "cisne mío, mi juventud dichosa / expirando a los pies de Donizetti" (vv. 156-57). Woman, music, and swan are united in the eyes of the speaker. The reference to Gaetano Donizetti is an allusion to the setting (or at least the main setting) of the love story, the northern Italian city of Bergamo (*Gaetano*).[7]

According to Rozas, the first stanza that appears entirely between parentheses (stanza eight) marks a turning point in the poem from illness to death (2). The intense storm described in this stanza is symbolic of the last agony before the calm of death takes over:

(mil ramas tronchó el viento en la espesura,
ramas de pinos, de manzanos, de álamos,
mórbidos frutos, mazos de rosales,
tronchó estatuas dejando cada fuente
repleta de agua verde y azufrosa,
arrancó campanillas y parterres,
el viento abrió ventanas en lo negro

[7] Donizetti, like the *amada*, died from a disease that ruined him mentally and physically, though it is uncertain what it was (*Gaetano*).

y un torbellino de perfumes agrios,
un huracán de flores machacadas,
……
y después de la lluvia violenta,
……
se llenaron de estrellas los tejados,
tembló la fría luna en cada charca,
un violín amordazó la noche,
en Bérgamo, después de la tormenta… (vv. 122-130, 134, 139-142)

The *tormenta* destroys nature in and around Bergamo, and the sound of a violin, perhaps a funereal melody, covers the town after. This stanza may mark the transition from illness to death; however, this incredible storm can also illustrate the speaker's inner anguish at knowing that he will lose his beloved. A symbol of destructive force, the storm may also represent the physical violence that the disease has done to the *amada*'s body. This storm of emotion or pain then ends with a sad and profound calm, the "fría luna" above.

The speaker continues, and references to the seasons of the year (autumn was mentioned earlier) re-emerge when the speaker refers to his own environment as he writes:

si me vieras ahora junto al fuego,
penetrado de ti, de tu memoria,
hay tanta nieve fuera y sin embargo
aún pasa por mi mente… (vv. 158-161)

The reference to winter suggests several things: the speaker's old age as he remembers the love of his youth, the maturity that such an experience has forced upon him, and the speaker's depressed emotional state. In spite of this, he finds himself pierced by memories of his beloved when they were happy, "cuando la flor llegaba a los almendros" (v. 175). The *flor de almendro* is a natural image that represents the love and life shared by the *amantes*. At the beginning of the relationship, the flower is blooming, but it ultimately ends when: "llamaron a la puerta, cuando abrí / sobre la escarcha había una flor de almendro, / la

enterraron bajo un manzano enorme…" (vv. 264-266). Rozas suggests that this is the point when the speaker learns of the *amada*'s death (27).

The verses between the blossoming and the death of the flower (the death of the *amada*), contain images more violent that previous ones. These are no longer images that foreshadow, but that clearly portray and remind the speaker of the illness as he writes:

> hay tanta nieve fuera y sin embargo
> no me distraen …
> ……
> ni la gallina muerta en el sendero
> esta noche pasada, ni los cerdos,
> ni sus entrañas rojas goteando
> sobre la nieve, sangre tan violenta,
> pero me llega otro recuerdo, tengo
> un recuerdo de sangre más valioso,
> y qué dulce y qué triste recordarlo (vv. 179, 186-192)

"Esta noche pasada" and the use of the present tense in this stanza indicate that the speaker is not remembering the past in this stanza, but considering his present surroundings. These images, the "gallina muerta" and the "entrañas rojas" dripping on the snow, remind him of the past and will lead him back to recounting memories in the past tense. The past, it seems, haunts him in the present, affecting his perception of the things around him—yet they do not "distract" him from his task of remembering. These last images of nature slaughtered lead us to the last days of the *amada*'s life ("un recuerdo de sangre más valioso") which, according to Rozas' reading, take place in "un sanatorio de jóvenes tuberculosos…[en el que las] muchachas, en vez de tomar champagne y de divertirse, lo que hacen es "beber" las notas de Chopin. (Recuerden que Chopin fue tuberculoso…)" (27). They listen to music while waiting for death, a frequent visitor to this place: "cada noche llegaba la visita / de la Muerte

con rostros diferentes" (vv. 221-22). Finally, the stanza ends with an allusion to the amada's funeral: "ataúd blanco para una dama triste" (v. 231).

"Triste" refers to the amada's mental state as her physical health deteriorates—as we mentioned earlier, she is also in a state of depression from which she will never come out. Stanza eleven illustrates her state of mind and the speaker's last attempts to reach her (remember that the order of events is not necessarily linear because they occur in the order that they are remembered):

> ven, pájaro enjaulado, veo un poco
> de mí posado en tus dos ojos mínimos,
> ven pájaro llegado con la lluvia,
> déjame que me mire, casi dos
> negrísimas cabezas de alfileres
> son tus ojos y quiero verme en ellos,
> hecho para la Muerte cantas menos
> mientras me entregas tardes abrasadas,
> quisiera apresurarme, tienes todo
> lo que perdí en tus ojos, concentrado,
> lucha el sueño y la muerte en esta estancia,
> luchan quince estaciones en mis ojos,
> mis últimos recuerdos, mis ensueños: (vv. 234-245)

Here the speaker refers to his amada as a "pájaro enjaulado" in the sanatorium. He attempts to communicate with her one last time before she dies, but she may be too far gone mentally. A spark of recognition—"veo un poco de mí posado en tus dos ojos"—offers one last hope, but he knows that her destiny is to die: she is "hech[a] para la Muerte" (v. 239). His bird sings less because she knows her fate is death—music represents life and passion, which are slipping away from her. Finally, the speaker's "últimos recuerdos" ("la muerte") and his "ensueños" struggle to dominate his thoughts—the fantasies prevail.

We see the speaker's fantasies manifest in the last stanza of the second part of the poem (stanza twelve), from which the poem and the book take their name:

> ¿recuerdas aún la historia del sepulcro?
> entre el mar y las selvas de Tarquinia
> alguien abrió el sepulcro de un guerrero
> oculto desde el día de su muerte
> ……
> entraba el aire y todo se mutaba
> en polvo negro y sacro que no hedía,
> se derrumbó la curva de aquel pecho,
> el cerco de la boca, la alta frente,
> la enlutecida noche de los ojos,
> ……
> (primavera en Tarquinia sepultada) (vv. 271-74, 281-85, 292)

This *historia* is the central metaphor for the death of the *amada* and for death in general. The story of the *guerrero* is symbolic of the process of decay and ruin, and the fragility of memory faced with death and time. Disintegrating when exposed to the air, the warrior's remains are proof that time will not preserve anyone's memory. The following stanza then describes how grave robbers violate the sanctity of the tomb, searching for gold. Rozas comments:

> Si este hermoso guerrero ha muerto hace tiempo (y su tumba ha sido profanada y expoliada…); si la naturaleza también rompe con sus tormentas a la naturaleza; si la iglesia está saqueada y destrozada; si las fuentes están maniatadas y amordazadas; si naturaleza, vida, historia, belleza; si todo muere; si todo es perecedero… ¿qué mejor contexto existe para que el poeta comprenda que la muerte de su amor, que la muerte de ella es normal, y que todo es así de perecedero? (28)

But Rozas' theory is not wholly accurate—the speaker, even in this destructive world, considers his *amada*'s death to be a great tragedy. For him, her death is the culmination of all the destruction in this world, not merely a "normal" occurrence within it. While time is

often considered to promote healing, here Colinas characterizes it as one of the factors that contributes to the eternal destruction of beauty and life in this world.

The story of the *guerrero* leads into the last part of the poem which Rozas describes as a flashback in time, but which I believe to be the speaker's fantasies—after her death all he has are memories and fantasies of what might have been. Unfortunately, his daydreams, like his memories, are permeated with similar images of death and destruction, and the same sense of inevitability. The most realistic couplet in perhaps the entire poem is: "estás allí, remota y entrevista, / enterrada en la tarde de septiembre" (vv. 322-23). Following this statement, the speaker begins his fantasy ("te recuerdo...," v. 326), imagining that she is alive once again ("si posara en tus venas una mano / sentiría la noche y sus campanas"); and in his fantasy, the lovers will die together:

> si me sueñas, si esperas, te hallaré
> ……
> morir contigo en esta tarde única
> cantando en las murallas sonrosadas
> por las luces más frías del invierno… (vv. 333, 336-38)

The lines that follow describe an important element in this fantasy—the *acto amoroso*. The lovers, however, never seem to consummate the act before death, indicating an eternal state of desire that will never be fulfilled. The amada passes by her lover like a "río colmado," a symbol of desire and possibility:

> abres los muslos, abres las dos manos,
> tus dos pechos apuntan a la nieve,
> tu vientre es una zarza a medio arder,
> ¿son ramos o racimos esos labios?
> *morir sin estrujarlos qué delicia*,
> verte pasar como *un río colmado*,

ser ajorca en tus pies, en tu muñeca,
no besar esos labios…
……
Amor tiene en los labios *cicatrices,*
morir sin poseerte qué delicia (vv. 349-356, 361-62, emphasis mine)

The relationship cannot be consummated now that the *amada* is dead (we don't know if it ever was in life), but keeps the speaker in a constant state of reminiscence and longing—this desire is what conjures his *ensueños*.

The last three stanzas, part of the fantasy, are like a narrative within the poem: the two lovers arrive on Torcello, an island of Venice. Here the *amada* speaks for the first and only time: "(antes de que se hundan estas islas / —dijiste—has de cantar su pesadumbre, / su belleza, sus sueños enterrados)" (vv. 376-78). She, an illusion in this fantasy, commands him to write, "cantar" as a poet, the story of this beautiful sinking island of Venice. The island becomes a symbol, like the story of the *guerrero*, of death, ruin, and the infirmity of memory. Inevitable, the flood that will take over the island represents the process of time, which has the power to erase all recollection. The story of the island is also *their* story, the story of their ruined relationship, the *amada*'s ruined health and mind, and his "sueños enterrados," the dreams that he had to bury with her. On the island, the lovers watch the last boat leave, never to return: "vimos partir la última nave, / era el nuestro un suicidio acariciante" (vv. 390-91). In his fantasy, they decide to die together, waiting for the water to finally flood the entire island, "toda la isla nuestra" (v. 404). At first, this fantasy is "un infinito gozo," their world surrounded by "una música / hecha con silencio de la mar" (vv. 400-401). In the last stanza, however, the speaker realizes that he is alone on the island (the world), and must ultimately face the reality of his sorrow and his solitude:

aquí nos trae el mar los peces muertos
y no hay más vida que la de las olas
estallando en la noche de las grutas,
……
el huracán arrancará geranios,
jamás llegará nadie a este lugar,
jamás llegará nadie a este lugar
y las gaviotas me darán tristeza (vv. 411-13, 4423-426)

Chapter III. (Reading and) Re-Writing "Sepulcro en Tarquinia" in *Larga carta a Francesca*

Larga carta a Francesca was written between July and December of 1985 and published the following year. The plot has two courses: the third-person omniscient narrative in which the protagonist lives the events that occur in the resort, and, within that, the first-person narrative related in the "larga carta a Francesca," in which he writes his and Francesca's history, from meeting to separation. The novel relates the story of Jano, a Spaniard who was living in exile for political reasons, and who continues to live outside of his country even though his reason for leaving is no longer valid. "La muerte del tirano"—presumably referring to Francisco Franco, though no name is mentioned—has nullified the threat (10). He had lived in Italy during the exile, where he met Francesca, but was obliged to leave her and is now staying at a resort in the Balkans, with uncertain plans for the future. At the resort, he knows Adriana, Marescu, and Peter, who are all also exiled from their countries for different reasons, mostly political. He also knows the resort's owners and their daughter, Betina, who comes to symbolize Francesca as Jano begins to fall in love with her. But his devotion to Francesca and his desire to travel east to Greece terminate this relationship at its start. Jano ultimately resolves his emotional conflicts by writing the letter to Francesca, and begins his journey toward Greece, *la luz*, and knowledge.

Both *Larga carta* and "Sepulcro en Tarquinia" are narrated from the perspective of a man telling, or remembering, the story of himself and his lover. While the novel relates a

clear narrative, it is much more difficult to perceive this within the poem. I propose that the third-person narrative course of the novel, in which Jano is only a character and not a narrator, serves as the framework for the "larga carta" and that the content of this letter—the love story between Jano and Francesca—is the story that parallels "Sepulcro en Tarquinia." More simply, the *carta* written by the protagonist in *Larga carta a Francesca* is based on the same story that the speaker and his *amada* share in "Sepulcro." Both the poem and the *carta* within the novel are written in first person, directed to the speaker's (or writer's) lover, *tú*. We can connect many elements between the poem and novel, giving the poetic elements context in the narrative—reading *Larga carta* virtually obliges readers to consider "Sepulcro" in the context of the novel. While certain elements in a poetic context can suggest, in a novelistic context they can *tell*. This section will show how *Larga carta* parallels "Sepulcro"—how Colinas rewrites his poem in a novel with a different ending.

The difference in genre between the two works does not separate them as much as it potentially could. Colinas is essentially a poet, and his true art is easily perceived in his prose. Colinas' prose can be characterized in two ways: the prose he uses to carry forward the third-person course of the plot is simple, direct, and practical—it relates the story. His descriptive prose, however, *is* poetry. Many verses from "Sepulcro en Tarquinia" can be directly related to phrases from the novel, and within these there often exist similar or identical images. Linking the two works linguistically and aesthetically (with images), is another way in which Colinas communicates his intention to rewrite the story within "Sepulcro." These are not merely coincidental images, but ones that are purposefully included in order to make this connection. For example, in the novel Jano stays in a resort by a lake, described in this passage: "Las aguas del lago estaban inmóviles, como muertas…y

tres cisnes hundían sus picos en ellas" (*Larga carta* 14). Its corresponding image in "Sepulcro" serves to connect the scenery of the two works: "un cisne flota en música de Liszt, / hunde su pico rojo en agua oscura" (vv. 143-44). We will explore more of these images in relation to several coinciding themes in the following pages.

Larga carta a Francesca is made up of ten chapters divided into three sections entitled "El arte," "El deseo," and "La enfermedad." By naming the sections of the novel, the author signals its three essential themes. These three elements also form a verse of "Sepulcro" found in the stanza that, according to Juan Manuel Rozas, describes *los jóvenes enfermos* in an institution for those with tuberculosis, where the ill *amada* is staying (2):

> …ellos tenían libros en las manos
> que nunca terminaban de leer,
> les inquietaban las estrellas húmedas
> y el grito de los cisnes en el lago
> les anunciaba el paso de la muerte,
> *la enfermedad y el Arte y el deseo*… (v. 211-16, emphasis mine)

These three terms will appear together again in the novel, when the protagonist describes a poem that he is trying to finish. Though both works are united by a love story, love is not one of these central themes because the lovers separate very early on in "Sepulcro", and even before the narrative begins in *Larga carta*. Rozas believes that the love story is of minor importance compared to Colinas' references to art and ruin (27). It can be argued, however, that the love story is essentially important because it is the single uniting factor within a poem that Rozas himself has labeled largely "irracional" (27). Without the story, it would be nearly impossible to make sense of all the images presented to us. It gives readers something to give context to the rapid and intense succession of images and allusions in "Sepulcro."

The women introduced in both "Sepulcro en Tarquinia" and *Larga carta a Francesca* share numerous characteristics—both are directly connected with *la enfermedad, el arte, y el deseo*, for example. Colinas unites them both through language and images, making it probable, if not certain, that the central feminine figures in the two works are one and the same. At making this comparison, we will analyze how the author portrays both Francesca and the *amada* of "Sepulcro." Colinas has said that the women that appear in his works are not necessarily inspired in one or a few specific women, but by the universal concept of woman (Personal interview). In his portrayal of the qualities of women through his female characters, it follows that Francesca and the *amada* are the same: not only are they the same fictional character, they are both representations of Colinas' universal conception of woman. In addition, Colinas does not develop the personalities of these two women, but conceives them as abstract figures defined by the world around them.

First let us mention the physical or aesthetic attributes given to each woman, their most apparent characteristics, to which Colinas dedicates much attention. We saw earlier how the speaker describes the *amada* of "Sepulcro" through a reference to one of Botticelli's portraits of Simonetta Vespucci. In *Larga carta*, Jano compares her with this same figure and with several other paintings: one by the Lorenzetti brothers (21), da Vinci's portrait of Isabel d'Este (54; the poem references Beatrice d'Este, Isabel's sister, but not as a physical comparison), and several other works mentioned in the passage below. Near the beginning of the letter, he writes: "Te identifico, Francesca, con rasgos, colores, notas musicales, con los ojos, bocas, cinturas o manos de otras muchachas" (*Larga carta* 22). This passage is an example of how the author abstracts this character through exterior elements. Later, Jano remembers how he contemplated her face before they had even met:

> Pronto me olvidé del cartel de Leonardo [da Vinci] y solamente me interesé por tu perfil. A veces, difícilmente podía verte el rostro, aquel rostro que más tarde, al contemplarlo con precisión, nada tenía que ver con el de Isabel d'Este, sino más bien con un rostro de Botticelli. El juego continuaba. ¿Se asemejaba tu rostro al de algunas de las mujeres de *La Primavera*? ¿No era quizá el de *La nascita de Venere*…? Acabé convenciéndome…de que tu rostro asemejaba enormemente a una de las jóvenes de *Venere e le tre Grazie*…aquella Gracia que ladeaba levemente su cabeza hacia la izquierda con la misma y delicada inclinación que la Venus que surgía del mar verdoso… Entonces quedó establecido que eras un personaje de Botticelli y no de Leonardo. (*Larga carta* 54-55)

In this passage, Jano contemplates only Francesca's face, just as the speaker does in the poem—this identical manner of examining her connects the male characters and recalls the verse: "aquella virgen / de Botticelli con tu rostro" (v. 73-74). We know that the *amada* is definitively associated with the figure of Botticelli's portrait of Simonetta Vespucci, the same woman thought to be the inspiration for Botticelli's portrayals of Venus and other feminine figures in his paintings. Francesca is therefore physically similar to the *amada*, for both are compared to the same image of Simonetta, and both are "personaje[s] de Botticelli."

"La enfermedad," the title of the third part of *Larga carta* and an essential element in the poem as well, is another key factor that ties the women, and the works, together. It was mentioned earlier that the illness suffered by the *amada* in "Sepulcro" is probably tuberculosis (the quintessential Romantic illness). In the novel, however, it is Francesca's sister Patrizia who dies of a pulmonary disease, falling ill after a great storm during which she falls (or jumps) into the lake:

> Quizá…ella había perdido el equilibrio…[pero] mientras transportábamos su cuerpo aterido y empapado, hubo una muchacha que señaló que tu hermana se había arrojado al agua de forma absolutamente premeditada. (*Larga carta* 38)

Jano writes that it is originally *pulmonía* from which Patrizia suffers, however, pneumonia can potentially cause the onset of tuberculosis in those who carry the latent bacteria (*Larga*

carta 39; "Pneumonia"). Later Patrizia's illness becomes more serious: "Una noche la sangre brotó de sus labios. No tardamos en saber que la sangre provenía de sus dos pulmones" (*Larga carta* 116). This passage coincides with the image of the "flores de la sangre" on the lips of the *amada* in the poem (v. 218). Coughing blood is a symptom of tuberculosis, not of pneumonia—we know that Patrizia's illness has worsened ("Tuberculosis").

Furthermore, the passage that Rozas describes in "Sepulcro" as a scene in a sanatorium, or an institute for those with tuberculosis, repeats itself in the novel. In the following two passages, the coinciding images are italicized:

> las *coronas de rosas* se pudrían
> sobre sus *frentes de marfil y fiebre*,
> *ellos tenían libros en las manos*
> *que nunca terminaban de leer*,
> les inquietaban las estrellas húmedas
> y el grito de los cisnes en el lago
> les anunciaba *el paso de la muerte*,
> ……
> cada noche *llegaba la visita*
> *de la Muerte* con rostros diferentes,
> ……
> *ataúd blanco para una dama triste*
>
> (vv. 209-15, 221-22, 231; emphasis mine)

> No volvió la sangre a los labios de Patrizia, pero *la muerte comenzó a empapar*…a través de *una fiebre intensa* y constante, cada objeto de la habitación del sanatorio: *la novela recién aparecida…que ella no logró abrir*, un *ramo de flores* que no llegamos a cambiar…Allí…*dejamos sepultada a Patrizia*. (*Larga carta* 117, emphasis mine)

The many similarities in these two passages are important for connecting the *hilos narrativos* of the two works. Colinas, however, shifts the fatal illness to Francesca's sister so that the novel can end with the contrast between Francesca's mental illness, *la sinrazón*, and Jano's choice to follow the path of *la razón*. Francesca's death by tuberculosis would not allow this.

Both the *amada* of the poem and Francesca's sister also show signs of physical *and mental* illness. Tuberculosis is nonetheless a uniting factor between the two works, and it is significant that Patrizia's illness initiates the mental illness that Francesca suffers after her sister's death. Jano writes to Francesca: "Tus melodías parecían luchar una y mil veces –de forma obsesiva– con la enfermedad de Patrizia" (39). The decline in Francesca's desire to sing throughout the novel coincides with her mental decline and the decline in the harmony of her music (this reminds us of the verse: "hecho para la Muerte cantas menos," v. 240). Colinas utilizes music as a symbol of harmony, but it, too, breaks down as Jano and Francesca's happiness and stability deteriorate.

Music is an essential element in many of Colinas' works, especially his poetry. He integrates a rhythm directly into "Sepulcro" by means of the *metro endecasílabo*, and is able to control the pace of the poem by means of punctuation and diction. Prose does not generally allow for this kind of rhythmic control, however, Colinas is able to incorporate music in another way. Allusions to composers and specific musical pieces are abundant in *Larga carta*, many of them originating from Francesca's deep love for music—she is a student of the art of "el Canto." Virtually all are classical pieces, and many are Italian in origin. There are references to concerts in "Sepulcro," and the *amada* is associated with their performance, but readers cannot be sure of the connection: Is she a performer or a spectator? In the novel, however, Francesca sings in concerts as a student of *el Canto*, suggesting that the *amada* is the same.

The names of Jano and Francesca are of course charged with symbolic meaning. First, it's interesting to note that the characters in "Sepulcro" are not given names. They are essentially anonymous characters. Colinas names them in his novel in order to amplify the

impact that these characters cause for readers. That they have names allow readers to identify with and to know them better, more common in a novel. The poem, an abstraction of the novel's story, does not need to name its characters because there are only two. Kay Pritchett writes in her article, "Antonio Colinas's *Larga carta a Francesca*: A Lacanian Approach to Its Formal Construction," that *Larga carta* "revolve[s] around the artistic development of a poet, Jano, who, like the Roman god Janus, looks forward into the future and backward into the past" (263). The famous image of Janus (god of beginnings and endings, among other things) is that of a god with two faces that are looking in opposite directions. Jano, by reviving his past through the letter to Francesca, and at the same time considering a new (but still uncertain) future, embodies the characteristics of this god well. The name Francesca, in the context of Italian history and culture, will be most readily associated with that of Francesca from Dante's *Divine Comedy*: "Canto V" of the *Inferno*. The lovers Francesca and Paolo are found in the second circle of the Inferno, having been killed by Francesca's husband for committing adultery. Colinas does not wish to draw on the adulterous connotations, but on the tragic ending that the couple experienced, and their everlasting love in spite of it, a comparable experience to that of Francesca and Jano (*Divine Comedy* 5.73-141).

The image of the *tormenta* is another uniting factor between the poem and novel. There are frequent storms in the third-person narrative and the letter in *Larga carta*. Their descriptions often coincide quite closely to the description of the great storm in "Sepulcro": "mil ramas tronchó el viento en la espesura," the first verse of the stanza describing the storm, is followed by images of broken trees, destroyed statues and fountains, crushed

flowers, and intense rains (see pages 14-15 for the excerpt; vv. 122-134). In his *carta*, Jano describes the storm during which Patrizia falls into the water and its aftereffects:

> "*Llovió con fuerza*…[y después]…El suelo del jardín estaba sembrado de hojas y de *ramas tronchadas* por la tormenta. Al acercarme al banco observé [que alguien] *había cercenado la cabeza de la Venus*, que descansaba sobre las losas del suelo destrozada, pero conservando aún no sé qué dolorido y bello rictus en sus labios borrosos…" (*Larga carta* 38-39, emphasis mine)

Just before the stanza describing the storm in the poem, there is an image of "sangre en aquel busto destrozado" (perhaps another reference to tuberculosis; v. 116); in a later stanza, there is also a reference to "la Venus mutilada del jardín," an image identical to the one above (v. 194). All the destroyed statues, in both works, especially those associated with Venus, signify the destruction of art and beauty—parallel to the decline of Francesca's music and also to her death. Jano, who virtually sees Francesca as a work of art—a statue, a painting, a melody—naturally creates metaphors for her death through the destruction of art. The speaker of "Sepulcro" has made the same comparisons. The storm in the poem then leads to an aftermath of death and hopelessness, while the storms in *Larga carta* ultimately lead Jano to desire the opposite of what they signify. For example, the storm signifies the anguish that the *amada*'s illness causes her and her lover—it is the storm before the calm of death and the aftermath of destruction. In the novel, the storm symbolizes a similar emotional torment before Patrizia's death. It also coincides with Jano's inner struggle—his desire to travel East versus his attachment to Francesca and their past in Italy (and his relationship with Betina, for Jano a symbol of Francesca). The very image of the storm carries connotations of violence, darkness, and danger. This is the opposite of *la luz* (Jano's ultimate goal), which for him means knowledge, safety, and harmony.

Not only do innumerable symbols, images, and narrative elements coincide between the two works, Colinas alludes to each work in the other. "Sepulcro en Tarquinia" contains a reference to a young man who wrote unsent letters, part of the basis for the narrative of *Larga carta*, in which Jano writes a letter to Francesca that he believes he will never send:

> …rojo cojín para aquel *joven rubio*
> *que nunca echó las cartas que escribía*,
> ataúd blanco para una dama triste (v. 229-231, emphasis mine)

In the novel, the protagonist frequently alludes to a long, unfinished poem that he is still trying to write. Colinas includes autobiographical elements in both works, particularly in characteristics of the Jano and the speaker of "Sepulcro." It is therefore not implausible that Jano's long, "inacabado poema," in reality, refers to "Sepulcro en Tarquinia," a poem of about fifteen pages in length that he wrote principally in Bergamo (*Larga carta* 90):

> Se puso a trabajar otra vez en *el extenso poema* que a lo largo de los últimos meses (y especialmente en los días de Monteoscuro) no podía releer sin sentir náuseas o dolor. Mucho tenía que ver la atmósfera que le había rodeado a lo largo de los últimos años –los años de Milán, el año de Monteoscuro– con *aquellos versos en los que el Arte, el deseo y la enfermedad se debatían obsesivamente*. (*Larga carta* 43, emphasis mine)

In this passage Jano offers readers some insight into the development of his *extenso poema*; in turn we may interpret this to be a clue to interpreting "Sepulcro en Tarquinia." We have seen these words before in different passages of both works—they recur several times, both together and separately, to emphasize the centrality of the themes of "el Arte, el deseo, y la enfermedad." In the above passage, Jano tells his readers that his own long poem treats the same themes that are central to the very novel of which he is the protagonist *and* to "Sepulcro en Tarquinia." This connection is strong evidence of the unity of *Larga carta* and "Sepulcro."

The two works share some other cultural references as well that don't necessarily influence the action of either work, but they do serve to unite them artistically. In the novel, for example, Jano recounts in his letter to Francesca a time when she read to him poems from *Le Città del Silenzio* by Gabriele D'Annunzio. He even mentions a few specific poems, one of them "Ferrara," part of which Colinas uses as an epigraph to introduce "Sepulcro en Tarquinia" (see footnote on page 8; *Larga carta* 142-43). The author's preferences in the arts, particularly painting, music, and literature, frequently appear in both works—another autobiographical component. These, and many other cultural allusions serve to illustrate another aspect of Colinas' culturalist aesthetics—his tendency to explain fictional worlds in terms of art and specific references to art. In "Sepulcro" and *Larga carta*, Colinas employs references to Italian art, geography, and history almost exclusively. He revives his culturalist tendencies (more prominent in the 1970s) in order to write *Larga carta* in the same register as "Sepulcro."

The main setting for both "Sepulcro" and the *carta* is Italy, specifically Bergamo. It was mentioned earlier that Colinas spent four years living in northern Italy: Bergamo and Milan (1970-1974), working as a lecturer of Spanish literature at the universities. He took advantage of his time there to travel and to visit museums, historical sites, etc. The cultural impact of his years there is probably strongest in his book *Sepulcro en Tarquinia* (1975). In the first-person narratives of each work, the author is writing about the past; he is remembering his days in Italy when he was with the woman he loved. The present setting of the poem (the location of the speaker or poetic voice) is uncertain—it may be in Italy—several cities are named within the poem: Verona, Crotone, Sirmione, and Bergamo. We could also assume that the setting is where Colinas wrote the poem: Monterosso al Mare, a

small town in Liguria, Italy. What action we can observe in "Sepulcro" seems to take place in Bergamo. (Milan is perhaps not mentioned in "Sepulcro" because, as Jano tells us in the novel, that is where he and Francesca were happy—the poem does not relate that part of the relationship.) The setting of the third-person narrative of the novel is revealed at the beginning, though it, too, is vague: Jano, the protagonist, is staying at a resort somewhere in the Balkans, near a lake and within view of the mountains. The setting of the narrator's memories in the *carta*, however, is always in Italy, starting in Milan, and ending tragically in Monteoscuro, which Colinas has confirmed as the fictional name for Bergamo (Email 1). Ultimately, we find that the tragic events of both works take place in Bergamo.

In "Sepulcro," the tragic illness of the *amada* ultimately results in her death. The novel, however, alters this ending: it ends with the mental illness and confinement of Francesca, not her death. The protagonist then, after a long process of grief and conflicting desires (his desire to stay faithful to Francesca's memory and go to Greece, or to pursue a relationship with Betina), chooses to travel to Greece, to take the path of *la luz*, the symbol of knowledge. Colinas writes a different ending for *Larga carta* because, at the time he wrote it (1985), he had been studying early Eastern thought and integrating it into his own philosophy and writing. An excerpt from an interview between Colinas and a group of German students in 1991 confirms this:

> …A partir de los últimos diez años…me he aproximado al pensamiento primitivo oriental. El interés que siempre he sentido hacia la mística se ha desbordado al contacto con ese pensamiento, y también al contacto con la mística originaria, la que llega del Oriente. (Trabanco 53)

I believe that it was this new perspective that caused Colinas to rewrite the story of "Sepulcro" with a new ending, a hopeful one where the protagonist chooses knowledge over

pain and uncertainty. As Colinas himself writes in the introduction to one of his anthologies: "Hay momentos decisivos en la vida, como aquéllos en los que el ser humano se *inicia*, en que el ser *re-nace* a otro conocimiento y a otra *luz*" (*Anthropos* 4, emphasis is the author's). In a manner of speaking, both Colinas and Jano have experienced this rebirth to another way of thinking.

In "Sepulcro," the speaker writes the poem to remember—he ultimately ends up reviving sad memories and creating equally sad fantasies. The final result is grief and solitude: the last two verses of the poem are "jamás nadie llegará a este lugar / y las gaviotas me darán tristeza" (vv. 425-26). In contrast, Kay Pritchett asserts that for the protagonist of *Larga carta*, writing the *letter* is a process of recovery (263). In this act, Jano also relives many sorrowful memories, but he purges himself of them as he writes each one down. During the third-person narrative of the novel, Jano frequently refers to the "extenso poema" that he is unable to continue—he can't finish it because this poem, a representation of "Sepulcro en Tarquinia," *cannot* cleanse him of his sadness as his letter to Francesca finally will. If he had finished it, Jano's poem would have ended just as "Sepulcro" does, with an endless sorrow and solitude. Jano burns the unfinished poem along with most of his other worldly possessions, save a painting given to him by his friend Peter, a print of one of Botticelli's *Simonetta* portraits, and a photo of Francesca. Jano's poem and "Sepulcro en Tarquinia" are so closely connected that we may assume that they are the same work, though one is fictionalized in the novel. When Jano burns the poem, this act is a metaphor for Colinas' rewriting and changing of its story in *Larga carta a Francesca*. (That Francesca does not die is significant, although her mental illness could be perceived as a kind of death—the death of reason or intellect. Her survival is partly what allows Jano to move on

and to seek *la luz*, the opposite of *la sinrazón*, what Francesca has come to represent.) This burning of the poem is symbolic of a fresh start, like the sending of the *carta*. Jano realizes that he cannot forget the past altogether, so he decides to take a few memories with him as he journeys east to Greece, toward the rising sun and knowledge.

In other words, "Sepulcro en Tarquinia" and *Larga carta a Francesca* embody essentially the same love story, but with two distinct endings. For this reason, the titles of the works have nothing in common. The title "Sepulcro en Tarquinia" focuses on the idea of death and finality, while *Larga carta a Francesca* contains no such allusions. The letter, in fact, represents the opposite of the sepulcher—a sepulcher confines, but it is Jano's writing of the *carta* that releases him from his sorrow and allows him a new beginning. There is no finality to the novel—*Larga carta* gives us an ending charged with hope and possibilities.[8]

[8] It is in fact only the second novel of a trilogy that Colinas has not yet concluded. The first book, *Un año en el sur* (1985), stands independent from *Larga carta*, although Jano is the protagonist of that work as well.

Chapter IV. Conclusion: Colinas' Journey from Culturalism to Taoism

"Sepulcro en Tarquinia" has been republished five times since its original publication in 1975, and has another edition currently in preparation. In contrast, *Larga carta a Francesca* was published in 1986 (with a second edition in 1989) and has received little attention since. That these two works are essentially counterparts has gone largely unnoticed by critics and readers, although the difference in genre may account for this in part. Colinas rewrote "Sepulcro" in a distinct literary genre because he could not destroy (by re-writing) or discredit (by changing the ending) the exquisite poem that he had perfected. One vital question remains as I close my discussion: Why did Colinas rewrite "Sepulcro," and not a different work, years later in *Larga carta*? We might take some insight into this question from a quote that Colinas uses to introduce a book of short stories, *Días en Petavonium* (1994):

> Todo mi trabajo, toda mi actividad creativa, provienen de aquellas fantasías y sueños iniciales. Todo lo que logré más tarde en mi vida ya estaba contenido en ellos, aunque al principio sólo en forma de emociones y de imágenes. Todo comenzó entonces. (quote from Carl Jung, found in *Petavonium* 9)

In other words, Colinas explains that the essential elements seen early on in his work will repeat as he continues to write. According to this statement, "Sepulcro" can be considered a starting point, "en forma de emociones y de imágenes," for one of the many paths his writing will follow. I also believe that Colinas chose this poem specifically because, as he told me: it is "el más amado y conocido de mis poemas" (Email 1). As such, the author has had to

frequently re-edit the poem in order to republish it, and has therefore had many opportunities to rethink the story it contains.[9]

While re-integrating his earlier culturalist aesthetics into his later work, in *Larga carta* Colinas has moved on from his earlier philosophy: we observe Colinas' shift to Eastern thought, reflected in the novel's ending: Jano's decision to follow "la luz del conocimiento," instead of the path of love which holds doubt and possibly pain. "Sepulcro" concludes without light, nor any symbol of hope; its very title conveys the idea of the finality of death, the darkness of a tomb: "vimos partir *sin luz* la última nave, / era el nuestro un suicidio acariciante" (vv. 390-91, emphasis mine). In *Larga carta*, sending the letter originally meant for Francesca to Betina is symbolic of Jano's decision to continue to Greece, and of his (and Colinas') modified philosophy. "Sepulcro en Tarquinia," on the other hand, offers an ending of isolation, death, and sorrow: "nadie llegará a este lugar / y las gaviotas me darán tristeza" (vv. 425-26). Colinas' change in philosophy caused him to reconsider the traditional tragic love story found in "Sepulcro." He decided to reshape it so that there was no need for a tragic ending. All love stories, even those that are happy and prolonged, must end with the death of one or both lovers. The path of *la luz*, however, emphasizes a self-love that will lead to knowledge, fulfillment, and contentment:

> Había sabido por fin quién era la verdadera destinataria de la larga carta. Ahora también conocía cuál era la ruta que tenía que elegir: la ruta de la luz del conocimiento, la única luz que podía dar plenitud sin fin, sin amenazas, a su recién segado amor por Betina: la única luz que podía seguir dando sentido y razón a la sinrazón de Francesca. Echó a andar de prisa hacia donde el sol —un resplandor blanco en un cielo blanco— se esforzaba por salir, hacia Grecia. (*Larga carta* 188-89)

[9] In fact, Colinas published an anthology of his poetry, including the book *Sepulcro en Tarquinia*, in 1984, just one year before writing *Larga carta*.

Colinas' interest in Taoism (starting in the early 1980s) began to lead him toward this new philosophy. Taoism (*el taoísmo* in Spanish) was developed from the teachings of Lao Tzu and his disciple Chuang Tzu starting in the 6th Century, B.C. (Jensen 220). In his article "Rhetorical Emphases of Taoism," J. Jensen writes:

> The Tao, 'the Way,' *seeks that simple, inner peace and contentment which comes from sending the higher realities behind life, from entering into a harmonious relationship with not only other people but also with Nature* and Heaven, with the eternal and infinite origin and end of life. …Taoism, in the words of the philosopher George Conger, 'offers a kind of cosmic discipline.' (220, emphasis mine)

Larga carta is a work that purposely demonstrates an evolution, in which we see the author juxtaposing his previous philosophy with a new one that is developing in that moment, one inclined toward Eastern thought, toward Taoism. As Taoism is "the Way" for its followers, Jano allegorically chooses to follow *el camino de la luz*. He decides to leave the anguish of his past for a peaceful future (*la armonía*). Again, it is because of this new philosophy that Colinas changes the ending of "Sepulcro en Tarquinia" when he rewrites it in *Larga carta a Francesca*. This is not to say that Colinas necessarily adheres to all Taoist principles, but rather that he is considering a different way of contemplating the world, which is reflected in his writing. This is perhaps why Jano chooses Greece as his destination and not a country further east—he is still on this journey to a new kind of knowledge or understanding of the world. *La luz* is a symbol of this new and different knowledge, one that could ultimately lead to a more harmonic, peaceful existence, ideas that are emphasized in many of Colinas' later works.[10] In his recent book *Cerca de la Montaña Kumgang* (2007, which he tentatively

[10] Some of Colinas' recent publications that reflect this idea are: *Tratado de armonía* (1991), *El crujido de la luz* (1999), *En la luz respirada* (2004), *Cerca de la Montaña Kumgang* (2007), *Desiertos de la luz* (2008), etc.

labels a book of prose poems), for example, Colinas proves to us that his journey toward *la luz* continues even today:

> Al fondo de nuestras vidas –en Oriente o en Salamanca…–, siempre hay un único afán, un deseo de ser y de estar en el mundo…, una afán de escribir siendo y de ser escribiendo. Al final siempre la misma meta para los humanos: el mismo afán de *conocer*. (*Kumgang* 7, emphasis is the author's)

He comments on the obligation of the poet to write "[para] ir más allá"—that the essential humanism of poetry allows it to be a saving art—one that may "testimoniar en favor de un tipo de vida más pacífica y plena, más favorable para una paz universal y duradera" (*Kumgang* 12).

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